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The last day

The clock was ticking, and it was almost one o'clock in the afternoon. Bus no 167 started from Thotalanga, Colombo, passing Bluemandle Street. All the 'mini rosa' bus seats were total by the time it arrived at 'armour street.'
He was already there when the bus appeared on 'armour street' wearing a pair of blue denim trousers and a long sleeves white shirt. As the bus turned from 'armour street,' he called from his mobile.

'Sir bus is coming' he said just that, then got into the bus with other passengers.

The bus moved slowly, passing armour street towards 'Panchikawaththa'. The one who got into the bus walked to the last row of seats. A few more passengers were standing beside him, but he got irritated seeing some students in school uniforms and older women. This was a very risky task. He thought that a crowded bus made it more difficult in such a situation.
'The person he is expecting to see will get into the bus any minute. Only god knows what will happen when he comes,' he started to think, looking out the window. His heart started racing. His fingertips started to shiver, so he grabbed the bus pole harder.
'No. He shouldn't be acting suspiciously in any way. Everything about to happen will be decided according to the way they handle this operation,' he thought to himself, trying to calm down.
'This will end soon, this will end soon', he started chanting.
Then he looked at the time once again. It was 1.10 pm exactly. He suddenly remembered something, so he started looking at all the passengers seated intensively.
'She must be somewhere in this bus.'

Since the bus runs in a bustling route passing areas where all nations live, like 'Thotalanga', 'Modara', and 'Armour Street', the bus was already filled with many different-looking females wearing different clothes. Some of them were Sinhalese & Tamils, who were wearing sarees and shalwar kameez, while some Muslim females were covered in hijab.
'She must be among them, disguised as a Sinhalese woman in a blue saree. He scanned through all the seats in the vicinity, but she was not there to be seen.
'Either she must have changed her disguise again while being followed or she must be sitting in one of the front seats.'
He carefully walked a few steps towards the front side of the bus since he couldn't see the front seats clearly to where he was standing. While strolling, he checked out all the women sitting next to him. Then the bus reached 'Panchikawaththa', so he stopped still.
'No, he shouldn't be going towards the front side anymore. 'The one' will get on the bus now. Therefore he should be standing near the back door of the bus.' He rushed to the bus's back door and stood covering the entrance from that door. The bus was reaching 'Panchikawaththa.'

Bus stop on the main road. The road was busy since it was almost 2 pm. He then got down to the stair of the bus and looked at the road ahead.
The 'Panchikawaththa' bus stop was only a few meters away when a voice on the bus took his attention.

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'Everyone got down from the front door' conductor was reaching the backdoor of the bus.
He grabbed the steel bar of the footboard tightly.
'what is meant to happen will happen now. If I die now, everyone on the bus will be torn to pieces with me,' he was frightened.

'Sir, please get into the bus if you are not getting down. Don't stand on the footboard.'
The conductor pushed him away and stepped down the stairs.

'I said, move' This time, his voice was aggressive.

But he didn't move. Not even a step away from where he was. It was better to stop more people getting on to the bus than to walk back into…, he thought. But this is not the time for it. If he tries to do so, this operation will tragically fail. He was silently staring at the bus stop.

The bus slowed down. The driver turned the bus to the left a little and stopped at the bus station. The conductor got off the bus and started to say the names of the stops on the way so people could quickly get on the right bus.

"Come get in from the back door. Don't wait to get in from the front door," he shouted. A few A few people who were waiting to get in near the front door came running to the back door, but there was a person who waited patiently for the passengers to get down so he could get in from the front door itself.

"Hey, the muslin one, get in from here", the conductor shouted again. But he didn't even move. He was adjusting his white hat. A few seconds passed, and all the passengers to get down from that stop were gone. He patiently got into the bus. As soon as he got on the bus, he made eye contact with the other person waiting near the bus's back door. As they were looking at each other, the driver started the bus to the next stop, 'Maradana'.

The one who got on the bus came to the middle of the bus so everyone can see him. He was wearing an off-white long 'Jubba' type dress. He was covering his upper body with a black shawl. As he entered the middle of the bus, he removed the shawl and shouted 'Allahu Akbar'. Everyone looked at him at once. People on the bus started to panic and scream when they saw what was attached to his upper body. Everyone tried to get out of their seats and run for life. But nobody could move afoot.

The 'Pakistan' looking fair and tall man took a detonator from his waist then pressed the switch screaming 'Allahu Akbar' again.

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Colombo Attack

SEVEN DAYS OF TOTAL TERROR IN COLOMBO

c@Nissh Em (Muthumudalige Nissanaka)

7 days ago

1st Explosion - Wasala Street, Kotahena

'Kotahena' is one of the busiest areas in Colombo. The area is about 23 square kilometres. It was one of the busiest 'mix cities' as Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims lived there. Therefore Kotahena was one of the unofficial residences of LTTE terrorists during the civil war. 'Masterminds' of a few great blasts around Colombo lived in this area. Or else the ones who planned those blasts or the suicide bombers lived here. Especially two suicide bomb blasts occurred in the 'Kotahena' area. One of the bombs targeted Mr Karu Jayasuriya,
the leader of the opposition party, UNP. The other was blasted in Kotahena junction inside a bus stop. More than 20 civilians were killed in these blasts then another barbaric attack occurred near Kotahena Shivam temple. United National Party's Minister T Maheshwaran was shot to death in cold blood when he came out of the temple with his wife. This happened in broad daylight as hundreds of people were watching.

Therefore Kotahena is recognised as one of the most dangerous areas in Colombo.
That was when the war was severe. But after the war, Kotahena became calm during the next few years. Except for the minor crimes and beastly activities of underworld gangs, no terrorist activities were recorded during those few years. Therefore even the police were moderately concerned about the area.

The story I'm about to tell you occurred when police attention was wholly taken from Kotahena and its terrorist activities.

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The time was almost 3 in the afternoon. Since most officers were out of the station for various duties, only a sub-inspector, a sergeant and a few constables were in the Kotahena police station. There was an area by the side of the entrance to the station where they registered the complaints. A middle-aged sergeant with a heavy body and a round face sat on a round table. A young woman was sitting in front of him who was around 25 years of age. The officer looked attentive to her complaint; hence she was pretty. He tried to make friends with her while writing down the complaint. At a time, he

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dropped the pen, leant onto the chair and gave her a lovely glance. But she didn't seem to like it much, so he started to write again.

The telephone, which was on a table beside him, started ringing. He signalled the woman to 'wait' and started to walk to the phone. Sub-Inspector (SI) 'Samarajeewa' was in a glass cabin beside the telephone. He raised his head and looked at the sergeant as he approached the phone. So he smiled childishly and answered the phone.
'Hello, this is Kotahena police station.'

'Hello,' it was a male voice from the other end. But the voice felt so far away. So the sergeant pushed the phone to his ear a bit more.

'Sir, is this Kotahena police station?'

'Yes, go ahead."

'Sir, I have a tip.'

'What is it about?'

'Sir it's about the bakery next to the laundry junction on Wasala Road. The upstairs rented.'

'So what?'

'A Muslim person is living there sir.'

'So what about him?' His eyes ran back to the young woman who was sitting in front of him. He could see her face in the mirror next to her. She was looking at him. He winked at her and hen talked in a more serious voice.

'So what is it that you have to say?'

'Sir, strange people are coming to the bakery these days. All kinds of people that we don't recognise. You should be alert.'

'So listen even if you don't recognise...'

The person on the other end disconnected the call. He looked at the young woman again. She is looking down. He hung up the receiver to go back to his seat.

At that exact moment, Sub Inspector Samarajeewa came out of his room.

'What was the call?'

'Not an important one sir, a complaint about a bakery.'

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'Which bakery?' SI Samarajeewa came out of his room to investigate another complaint, but after listening to this bakery story, he was curious.

'It's the two-storey bakery on Wasala Road.'

'Isn't it closed now"

'Closed?' The sergeant whispered.

The face of the SI changed with the sergeant's answer. Since he has been working attached to the Kotahena police station SI Samarajeewa knew everything about the area. The bakery had been closed for years, so knowing the upstairs had been rented drew his attention.

'What did the caller say?' He asked with a serious voice. Sergeant Rathnasiri understood the tone of his senior officer. So he decided to put away the thought of a young woman there.

'Sir, he said few Muslim people are hanging around."

SI wore the hat he was holding.

'Come'

'Sir.....'

'Come, to go check the bakery', SI Samarajeewa commanded and started to walk towards the parking area.

Sergeant Rathnasiri turned to the young woman still sitting there waiting for him. He wanted to continue taking her complaint but couldn't do anything about it now. SI was his senior. Also, he easily got annoyed, so he turned to the newly appointed constable.

'Finish that girl's complaint.'

Then he walked to his table and took his hat.

'I have to go out for an urgent matter. The constable will take your complaint' Then he passed a flirty smile to her.

'Let's meet again.'

'What do I have to meet you again for?' The woman got annoyed with his comment and said in anger.
The sergeant was discouraged and left quickly before the constable came there.

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SI Samarajeewa was already standing before the jeep when he got to the jeep.
'Sir, do we have to go to 'masala road'? He asked while rushing to the driving seat. SI Samarajeewa nodded to say 'yes' while entering the front seat. Rathnasiri started the jeep.
The Temple of lord Ganesha is situated next to the police station. Good Shepherd's Convent, one of the primary schools in Kotahena, is situated when turned from the junction next to the temple. The road leading to St. Lucia Church can be seen after the convent. Rathnasiri turned the jeep to the church road, then headed towards the masala road.

' Why are you so flirty?' SI Samarajeewa asked with a slight smile on his face.

Sergeant Rathnasiri smirked with his fitted-out set of teeth, saying, 'Sir makes fun of me.'

'No, I'm serious. You won't leave a single woman alone when they come to the police station,' this time, he said with a complaining voice. Rathnasiri looked at the face of his senior. SI Samarajeewa was looking at Rathnasiri, waiting for his answer. He couldn't guess whether his look was an angry look or a rugged look.

Even though SI Samarajeewa was severe, Rathnasiri thought he would make fun of him this time because he liked these conversations. Therefore he wanted to change the topic. He looked at 'Kotahena Flats'.

'There are lots of Muslim people living in those also.'

'So what?'

'I think that call was a prank. Or maybe someone complaining who is angry with them.'
'May be, but isn't it better to engage in this kind of a duty for you than to look at women in the police station?'

This time Rathnasiri's face faded with anger. But he still passed a slight smile. SI Samarajeewa saw how his face changed with the comment, so he tapped on Rathnasiri's shoulder.

'Did you take it seriously?'

'Not at all. I know you were joking sir,' he said with a smile.

Since they both have been working attached to the Kotahena police station for several years, they had a friendly bond. Even though SI Samarajeewa quickly got angry, he never shouted at the officers who worked under him incorrectly. But he always did his duty to the fullest. Even this very investigation was also an avoidable one. But he knew how severe a single tip could be, so he never neglected any.

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The jeep was travelling on the 'Lusia's' Lane. SI Samarajeewa asked Rathnasiri to stop the jeep after seeing a shop full of toys. Rathnasiri stopped the jeep by the side of the road, so SI Samarajeewa got down, bought a doll with a pink dress, and returned.
'Is it for your daughter?' Rathnasiri asked with a smile.

'Yes,' Samarajeewa nodded and placed the doll on the dashboard.

Samarajeewa lived with his family in a rented house on 'Lusia's' Lane. The jeep was passing the area.

'Sir, let's go to the house to drop this off then', Rathnasiri said, looking at the doll.

'No. She must be sleeping by now. Let's go finish the work first,' Samarajeewa answered with a smile.

Wasala Road was one of the busiest lanes in Kotahena. Various types of houses were situated on this road, and the 'wasala road bakery' was a two-storey building situated among those houses. When they stopped the jeep in front of the bakery, people came out of their houses to see what was happening. Rathnasiri took his baton from his waist and signalled everyone to return to the houses, but nobody moved.

Samarajeewa looked at the two-storey building as he got down. The name board 'masala bakery' was rotting away. Some time ago, this was a very successful business. But since the 'Tamil' owner passed away suddenly, the bakery was closed. The ground floor was closed with a big black steel door. Samarajeewa looked at the upper floor. There was a small staircase on the side of the building to go upstairs. Samarajeewa asked Rathnasiri to follow him and then started to climb up.

After the narrow staircase, they approached a closed door. There was a Sinhalese Buddhist sticker on the door. Rathnasiri started smiling when he saw another sticker near that which was in Arabic letters.
'Seems like they belong to all the religions'
Samarajeewa took a step back to look around the house. He signalled Rathnasiri to knock on the door. The door is situated right in front of the stairs. There was no place even to peek inside. Even though Rathnasiri knocked several times, there was no response, so he fastened the knocking. A lady opened the door slowly. She was surprised to see the police officers before her and then covered her head with her shawl.

'Who else is in the house?' Samarajeewa asked.

The woman looked back inside to call someone. A middle-aged Muslim man with a grey beard came out wearing a pyjama.

'Why...sir' he asked in broken Sinhalese.

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'We want to search the house', Samarajeewa said, looking at Rathnasiri. It was a sign for him to start the search. Rathnasiri looked around the house, but the man seemed not to agree.

'Sir, do you have a warrant?'

'A warrant is not needed' Samarajeewa entered the house, pushing the man away.

'Sir, you can't search the house without a warrant. Please come back with a warrant' The man again blocked his way.

Rathnasiri had also entered the house by then, so the woman followed him, trying to stop him. Samarajeewa stopped for a while to look at the man trying to block his way and the woman trying to stop Rathnasiri. 'This won't be a good sign', he thought, looking around the house. There was a room on the right side of the hall, and the door they entered from was behind him. On the left side was an open kitchen and a balcony. There was another closed door next to the kitchen. Samarajeewa signalled Rathnasiri to stop.

'Who is this?' Samarajeewa asked the man about the woman.

'That's my wife.'

She was much younger than him. Looking at the long beard, 'the man should be around fifty years,' Samarajeewa guessed. But the woman was about thirty. Then he took the walkie-talkie out from its case on his waist. 'Send a unit to wasala road bakery' The woman's face changed with that command. She looked at the man, and he was looking at her too.
Meanwhile, Rathnasiri tried to push the woman away to enter the closed room. The woman was faster than him. She rushed to the room before him and closed the door.

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The Muslim man seemed paralyzed by the woman's action; he stepped aside to sit on a chair.
Samarajeewa tried to open the closed door, but the woman had locked it from inside.
'Open the door', he shouted while knocking on the door.
Then he tried to open it by kicking several times but still was unable to.
Samarajeewa took his pistol from the cover and pointed to the 'lifeless' looking man on the chair.
'What's happening here?'
The man, frozen with fear, started to stammer. His words didn't come out clearly. Therefore Samarajeewa took one more step towards the man with the pointed gun to his head.
'Allah hu akbar, Allah hu Akbar, he was chattering continuously.

Samarajeewa looked at Rathnasiri while still pointing the gun at the man. Rathnasiri was trying to break the door by clicking it. 'Whatever is about to happen will not be good', Samarajeewa thought. He looked at the main entrance behind him. The door was still open. The backup team will take another 30 minutes to reach here from Kotahena police station. Staying here until then will not be a brilliant idea. Samarajeewa was frightened by the man's nonstop praying and the woman closing the door behind her.

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'Rathnasiri, move from there', Samarajeewa screamed.

The woman opened the door and stepped out before Rathnasiri started to think about moving from there. She was wearing a jacket full of bombs. Rathnasiri fell to the ground with fear. Samarajeewa tried to drag Rathnasiri by his hand, but they could not make another move. The Muslim man on the chair suddenly got some energy. He stood up, shouting 'Allah hu Akbar aloud. The woman joined him; they both shouted at the same time.

The house exploded as soon as the woman raised her hands. The whole 'wasala street' vibrated as the upper floor of the bakery was covered with flames. People near the bakery started running away, fearing for their lives. They had no idea what the blast was. Even the windows of the police jeep parked near the bakery were shattered by the shock of the bomb blast.

A piece of a human arm flew from the upper floor and then landed on the jeep's bonnet. It was impossible to guess whose hand it was as the flesh was burnt severely. A stream of blood from that hand fell on the doll on the dashboard turning the face of the doll red. The whole 'wasala street' was stirred up like an anthill. Everyone was frightened with the same 'bomb fear' during the war.

Major Latheef Mohmed

The Chief Inspector of Police of Kotahena police station and the officers of the terrorist investigation unit in Colombo came to the crime scene after the bomb blast. The entrance to wasala street bakery was closed, and the residents on that street were prohibited from stepping out of their houses. The news of the 'bomb blast in a wasala street bakery' was telecasted for a while so the street was covered with the sound of sirens and the vehicles of reporters and various defence officers. Meanwhile, the investigation into the blast was already started under the command of the Defence Ministry.

The head of the terrorist investigation unit, Mr Lal Kularathna and the Head of Colombo Crime Investigation Division, DIG Sena Kolambage, was at the crime scene. Their mobile phones were busy with calls from superior authorities. As Mr Lal Kularathna answered a particular call, he stepped away from the crowd and stood on a sidewalk.

"Yes sir. We have already started the investigation" He talked respectfully as if he was answering his superior.

"Is there a connection between this attack and the TIGER ?" Lal Kularathna looked back at the smoking house.

"Could be sir."

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"OK send me the report of this blast as soon as possible. Also, don't release any information to the media. Especially about the TIGER. We have to be very careful until the end of this mission. I can handle the pressure from the top. Use your best officers in this case," the voice on the phone said.

"Also Lal, this blast can be an advantage to them. So we have to find the TIGER soon."

"OK sir" Lal ended the call. He looked at the flames in the bakery for a while. The fire trucks arrived and started their duty immediately. Also, the media outside the covered area were telecasting the news live. Lal's face faded looking at that.

"Crazy dogs", he whispered, then took out an old small Nokia phone from his pocket.

"Latheef, where are you?" He received the answer from the other end. Then he put the phone back in his pocket and walked towards the crime scene.

Major Latheef Muhammad was one of the top officers who worked attached to the Colombo narcotic headquarters. While working in the narcotics department, he was a disaster to most drug smugglers in Colombo. Therefore he was named 'the devil" in The Underworld. During that time, more than 20 drug smugglers were killed by an 'unknown gunman'. Underworld trembled at the sound of Major Latheef Muhammad's name. This didn't end with just 20 deaths. He started a mission to destroy drugs and the Underworld from Colombo. Many leaders in underworld gangs around Thotalanga, Bluemandle, Kimbula Ela and Panchikawaththa were arrested in those days. Within a few days, their final rituals were completed without anyone's knowledge. Major Latheef became an incomparable police officer in the narcotics
and Crime Investigation divisions. He was mostly invisible.

Even though he was famous as 'the shooter", 'the devil' or 'narcotic Latheef' in the police department most of the officers have never seen him in person. Because of this reason, he was appointed to the terrorism investigation division in the Special Task Force. Since then he has become a complete shadow. He had connections with only several department heads who were in similar missions as him. Lal Kularathna was one of them. They had already started investigations on a Sri Lankan who was anonymously known as "TIGER", a powerful terrorist in IS organization. According to a tip received from 'The Raw' organization in India, the TIGER was already hiding in Sri Lanka.
After about 30 minutes, a black Jeep reached the crime scene. As the Jeep stopped, Lal Kularathna's eyes turned towards it. He was ready to enter the house when the fire was completely down. But he stopped momentarily, waiting to meet Major Latheef coming down from the Jeep.

The man who came out of the Jeep was fair as a foreigner. He was about 6 feet tall with a strong built body. He was wearing Denim trousers and a T-shirt with a sports cap on his head. Behind his sunglasses was a fully shaved fair face. He had a direct and stern Majesty. As he got down from the Jeep, another officer got down from the other side. He was also in a casual outfit, just like Major Latheef. He was shorter than the major and had flaky skin. He walked towards Lal

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Kularathna with Major Latheef, looking at the burnt building. They didn't shake hands or talk to each other. Instead, Lal Kularathna wore a smoke hood he took from an army soldier. As he gave two more similar smoke hoods to the two officers, they all wore them and entered the House.

RDX

The blast destroyed the stair house of the Bakery. There was a hole in the middle of the flow where they suspect the place of the blast occurred. The downstairs Bakery could be seen from this hole.

"This can't be C4", Lal Kularathna said, looking at the hole.

"RDX," said Major Latheef.

RDX was not an explosive found in Sri Lanka before this. Since the LTTE terrorists used C4 most of the time for their explosions, most of the bombs blasted in Colombo were made out of C4. Otherwise, they used TNT for their suicide bombers. But this RDX explosive was 1.5 times more powerful than TNT.

Lal was stunned as he heard the word RDX from Major Latheef's mouth. 'If RDX has been imported to Sri Lanka, then the blasts about to happen in the future will be more serious ones. This is more powerful than all other explosives. The damage will be huge. If someone uses this explosive for a suicide bomb, then the number of deaths caused by it cannot be even estimated,' he thought. TNT was used for the recent 'Jammu IAF Camp Base' blast in India.

'IS' he whispered.

Latheef didn't say anything. As he already knew about it, he looked around to see if he could find something new. There were a few burnt bodies near his feet. Even though the bodies were wholly burnt, he recognised the police shoe on one leg and guessed it must be the body of a police officer who came to investigate this house. The head of a woman was lying on a burnt chair.

"Suicider," he said, pointing to the head. The other two officers looked at the head. It could be identified as a woman because of her long hair. Other than that, the face and the head were destroyed.

Latheef's eyes went towards the room next to the hall. The door of the room is completely gone. The hole in the floor was in front of the room, so his attention became more focused on the room. He stood near the room with the other officer beside him. Even though the front side of the house was severely damaged from the blast, the room was not much damaged. Latheef didn't enter the room. After looking at the room, he looked at the forensics, who was already coming and asked him to 'check this room'. Then he looked at the

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other two rooms.

Two of these rooms, which may have been used as bedrooms, are also intact without much damage from the fire. He peeked into the rooms, had a look, and then walked towards the balcony. This balcony was built like a small corridor facing the main road leading to Wasala Street.

Major Latheef removed the smoke hood from his face as he entered the balcony and took a deep breath. From here, the main road and all the houses beside the road could be seen in a row. He looked at all the houses slowly, then stopped his eyes near a garage in front of the Bakery. This garage was a place where they repaired 'Bajaj' three-wheelers. Two boys were preparing a Three Wheel in front of the garage by the sidewalk. Next to it was a small grocery shop. Lateef walked back to the hall and then walked towards the staircase to go down.

"Latheef", he stopped with Lal Kularathna's voice.

There is still a tiny amount of smoke in the house. The flow of the house is filled with water. Water was still dropping from the ceiling.

"Latheef.....You take this over."

Latheef didn't say anything. He nodded his head walking to the stairs. He exited the house, crossed the road and walked towards the garage. This garage was just a single-room building, so there was little space inside. He was looking at the CCTV camera installed next to the name board of the garage.

"Is it working?" He asked a boy in the garage.

An unknown number

At Ginthupitiya, Kotahena, Colombo

When turning from the Kotahena intersection and going up, you will come across the Ginthupitiya colony.
Ginthupitiya is one of the most crowded areas in Colombo. There are lots of Muslim and Tamil people living there. When turned from Ginthupitiya Saint Anthony's statue, there is a row of slums nearby. There are many poor huts on either side of the slums. Most of the people who lived some labourers worked in Colombo Fort. Also, Heroin and drug trafficking flourished in these slums. But none of them were caught in any police investigation. Even the underworld leaders and the political elites kept the traffickers in these slums under their control, enabling them to sneak out before the police operations started.

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The mobile phone of a woman who lived in one of these slums started ringing after about 30 minutes of the Wasala street blast. Women looked at the phone. Since It was an unknown number and she knew exactly what it was, the woman ran into the house to answer it. She entered one of the rooms in the house. The room was filled with darkness. Another woman was lying on the bed inside the room. As the woman with the phone entered the room hurriedly, other women also got up and looked at her. She went next to the woman and held the phone between their ears so that they both could hear the voice from the phone.
"Asalam walekum", one woman whispered.
"Walekkum salam", the voice on the other end was also a female. Then there was a minute of silence.
"Is Sufi close by?" The voice on the phone asked.
"Yes," the woman looked at the other woman sitting on the bed before her and said.
"Sufi, **Mubarak** was a failure. The leader is very disappointed. Therefore your engagement is tomorrow at 3:00 a.m. The **groom** will be coming at 2:30 to Saint Anthony's statue. Be ready to leave," the voice on the other side said. Then there was silence again.
"Khuda Hafiz", The woman whispered, knowing the message was over.
"Khuda Hafiz. Heaven is ready for you. The leader's blessing is with you" The call was over. The small beam of light from the phone screen was gone by the end of the call leaving the room in total darkness. But two women in the room were silently looking at each other. They didn't say anything. But they were looking at each other's faces.
After a while, one woman got up and switched on the small light in the room.
"Shiara, we have to get ready now. The leader is waiting for our action," she said to the woman on the bed. That was a young girl about the age of eighteen. She was looking down. Her heart was burning with some terrible pain. Therefore the other woman walked towards her and sat on the bed next to her.
"Shiara this is the day we have been waiting for."

Fifteen years ago

At the 'Digana' area where the Sinhalese and Muslim riots occurred.

A protest took place in Colombo Galle Face against an Islamic extremist organization. It was called 'Remove extremist schools immediately'. A lot of Sinhalese people were attending to this protest. Representatives from various patriotic groups came to the big stage built in Galle's face. They publicly spoke about the churches and schools these extremist organizations have built and the damage and scandals they cause to Sri Lankan society. Also, a leading politician got onto the stage and started to spread his thoughts.

"Dear beloved, 'Al Hasa' is an organization that depends on Arabic funds. What they are doing is putting extremist teachings into people's heads that are not related to the Quran at all. These teachings never make people love this country. They will love only Arabia. What will they do when they grow up? They will dance to any tune Arabics say. Even if Arabics ask them to blow

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up Sri Lanka, they will not hesitate to do that.This is how this country will go down in the future. We must stop this now before this country becomes another pawn of Arabia. If the spineless hawks in the big seats in our politics can't stop this, we as Sinhalese people who love this country should also take the lead to stop it."

As soon as he said this, the Sinhalese, who were very fond of the heroic Patriotism, started applauding. The speech must have warmed their blood, and the Patriotism must have been echoing in their hearts.

That was all. From then on, the assault began. First, a series of attacks were launched centred on Colombo. A few prominent mosques in Colombo were destroyed. Protests spread to Colombo and the cities outside it; the damage was felt most severely in cities like Ampara & Trincomalee, where most Muslims lived.
Of all, the worst tragedies occurred in Digana. Enraged by Muslim churches, the revolutionaries entered the Digana 'Maji-hadin' mosque. As mosques were attacked throughout the country, Muslims were ready to fight to protect their sacred ground. It was easy in areas where most Muslims lived but not in areas where the majority were Sinhalese.

While Sinhalese attacked the 'Maji-hadin' mosque, the Mawlavi, who controlled the mosque, and some of his closest people were guarding the mosque. The revolutionaries first attacked the mosque with stones and sticks. The group guarding the mosque took the swords hidden there and came out to attack. After a while, a battle broke out between the two groups. When Muslims attacked with swords, revolutionaries attacked back with petrol bombs.
This battle ended with all those staying in the mosque being severely beaten. While some ran away from the beatings of the revolutionaries, others fought till the last moment to save the mosque despite the petrol bombs.

The Mawlavi was also one of them. He, with a long grey beard, guarded the mosque till the last moment preventing revolutionaries from entering. But suddenly a petrol bomb from outside hit his body. It started to burn him out. With his body on fire, he ran to the church gate, where many revolutionaries existed. Terrified by this ugly scene, the revolutionaries fled. Mawlawi Deegana, who ran out of the church gate burning with fire, was dragged and fell in the middle of the highway.

His final rituals occurred in Digana. Since his death was a murder, his wife complained to the Durga Town police station. But nobody was ready at the police station to take over her complaint. The chief officer ignored her complaint, saying, 'It wasn't a murder but a death caused by a conflict between two groups'. He also said that while this happened, both parties were armed, so this cannot be identified as murder.

She stopped bowing down in front of the police, knowing they were getting help from high politics to cover up this death in front of thousands. But instead, she had a different plan. From that moment on, she decided to live according to her plan and take revenge for her husband's death from the Sinhalese somehow.
She came to Thirumalai with two young daughters after a few days of her husband's funeral. She handed over her daughters to her husband's brother, a Thirumalai Muslim School teacher.

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Fathima Sufi was already 15 years old. Her younger sister was eleven years younger than her. After leaving two children with their uncle, she escaped to Dammam, Saudi Arabia, where the headquarters of the 'Al Hasa organization was situated.
Sufi and Shiara grew up under the shadow of their uncle henceforth. Their mother sent them letters every month. Each letter ended with the same sentence. 'Do exactly what your uncle says. Do not turn away from the Quran or the 'Al Hasa' organization that provides our needs.

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Major Latheef returned to his office in the Colombo terrorism investigation division with the CCTV tape collected from the garage. He handed over the tape to Officer TB', who is in charge of computer data investigation.

"TB, follow all the data in the tape. I want information about all the people visited that house."

He looked at his office once again. This is a small office where his team planned all the special missions. Five members were working in this office. Major Latheef's table was in the attached room. At that time, a girl and three male officers were working in the office.

'Durga', he called the girl.

She was a round-faced girl with short hair.

'You work with TB. I need the information about all right now the girl quickly walked to TB. Latheef headed back to his office. This office was surrounded by glasses. The attached Latheef's office was visible from there.

Latheef's partner, Colonel Wikrama, kept the file he was holding on the table and sat on a chair. Latheef opened the file and checked the photos in it. The first picture was of the older man living in the exploded house.

'Abdullah Niwas Rahman, Age 67' Wikrama explained.

'The other one is his wife. They have been living together as husband and wife, but the lady is over 30 years younger than him.'

'How long have they been living here?'

'just six months Nobody was living in this house except these two.'

As he said this, Latheef leaned heavily on his chair. An arch behind the chair hung a row of medals he had won in active operations. After reading all the information thoroughly in the file with a serious face, he looked at his partner.

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'Wikrama, this is not a planned explosion. This was an accident. Therefore, we have to expect a planned attack.The question is when and how it will happen.'

Second Explosion

As the time approached two in the morning, an oil bowser stopped near Saint Anthony's statue in Ginthupitiya. There was a Bald Tamil man, about 50 years old. He was waiting with the bowser in front of the statue as instructed. After stopping near the statue, he got down from the bowser, went to the middle of the square where the statue of Saint Anthony was located, put his hand on the statue's foot, put that hand on his head, and took blessings. He is going on a journey of no return, and his eyes are filled with fear.

He recalled his leader's instructions while looking at the statue. "The bowser must be driven via Kochchikade Saint Anthony's Church to Hettiyawaththa, then to Elihouse Road. Then, going down EliHouse Road, you will find the Blumandle Refinery. As oil bowsers line up to pick up oil from the refinery at 3 am, He should also go inside the oil refinery along with those bowsers. The rest of the role will be taken care of by the two sisters carrying out this suicide mission.

When the bowser stopped near the statue, Fathima Sushi & Shihara were ready to go on their final journey. On their bodies were two RDX high explosives jackets. Sufi took one jacket and put it on her sister's upper body. As the jacket was too heavy, Shihara bent down. Sushi quickly held
her hand. 'It's all until we go to the bowser after that, you won't feel the heaviness of the jacket', she said, rubbing her sister's cheek. Her eyes were filled with great sorrow. As the little girl knew she was going on her final journey, she was helpless with pain. She had been preparing her mind for years for this explosion, but she couldn't help but feel horrified the moment she was about to do it. Sufi turned her frightened sister towards herself.

'Shihara, remember what Mother told us. Remember the master's teachings also. We are going to see our father. Mother will also follow us within the next few days. Then we can all live together again' Shihara looked up with tears.

'Now help me to wear this jacket. We are going on this journey together. So don't worry. I will be with you till the very end as I was with you so far' She took the jacket, tucked it in through her shoulders, and turned to the other side. Shihara helped her by tying the straps of the jacket tightly.
Everything was ready.
After wearing bomber jackets, they put black hijabs over them. Covering their faces with their upper cloaks, they knelt on the ground and said their last prayer for the Almighty God.

'Holy God, forgive us if we have sinned.
Help us in our purpose, our dream for the Kingdom of God, and our united intent,
God, welcome us into the kingdom of heaven,

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Give us your love, grace and protection,
This province is for that noble cause,
For the dream of a better kingdom of God!'

Finally, they opened their eyes while still needing to look down at each other. Then they held each other's hand.

'Khuda Hafiz Shihara'

'Khuda Hafiz Sufi'

That's all. They both took a deep breath, then started their journey.

Although RDX is the smallest explosive in size, it is heavy. Therefore they strolled while walking through the slums. The heaviness of the explosive weakened their legs.
According to the instruction by the leader, they should launch both explosions at the same time. The maximum damage to the refinery can be done by only doing that. These two sisters were ready for the mission.

'Asalam walekum'

They kept a hand on their chest and greeted the Tamil man on the bowser. The man greeted them back in the clear Muslim language. Two girls entered the bowser and sat behind the driver's seat in the dark area. The man covered them with a black plastic cover.

The browser started its journey. It came via Saint Anthony's Road from Jinthupitiya to Kochchikade as planned. The police officers on patrol at Kochchikade Coastal Police stopped the bowser. The person driving whispered 'police' and started to chant an Islamic religious mantra. He heard the women hiding next to him chanting the same mantra as him. As the bowser stopped near the police checkpoint, an officer came and had a look inside the bowser. The driver switched on a small light.

"Show me your license."

The driver handed him over the license and some other documents.

"Going to the refinery sir to get oil" The officer flashed his flashlight to the license and then to the driver's face.

That was satisfactory. He holds a valid license and a document issued by the company to get oil from the refinery. He handed back the documents after checking them one more time.

"Hmm... keep moving."

The driver switched off the light and started his journey again.

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Major Latheef was awakened early. Still single, he stayed in a hotel room on Mel Road, which was the same road as the terrorism prevention office located. This was his life. He didn't have a house. He had no wife or children of his own to look after. His duty was his whole life for him. When it was around 3 am, he walked out of his hotel room and sat on a chair in the hotel corridor. There was a glass of whisky in his hand. He looked at the 'Rio Cinema' poster while sipping the drink.

"Something worse will happen," his mind was telling him. "God only knows how high explosives like RDX were brought to Colombo by Islamic extremists, it must have been anyway. But now it is to thwart the explosions they are going to make with those explosives. But there is no evidence for that yet. The CCTV camera in front of the garage could certainly get information about the people who visited the house, but Latheef knew very well that it would not be enough. However, according to the forensic test reports, there was evidence that a lot of explosives were stored in the house before the explosion, but to whom they distributed them is still a matter of question."

According to the tip they have received from 'the raw' organization in India, a powerful member of IS called 'the **TIGER**' has come to Colombo. Latheef knew clearly that he was here to execute some operations. When LTTE terrorists send suicide bombers to Colombo, they send a 'handler' to execute their plans. In the same way, IS has also sent a handler. But the difference is, even though the LTTE sends a trained terrorist as a handler, IS sends a trustworthy 'Imam' who lives spiritually. He can lead the organisation's members towards the 'heavenly' mission.

Major Latheef finished his glass of whisky in a couple of sips. Roads in 'slave island' were almost empty and silent other than a few vehicles passing occasionally. The signal bonds on the road are flashing on and off, allowing the vehicles to pass freely. He leant back in his chair and closed his eyes for a moment.

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The bowser escaped from the police checkpoint, passing 'Hettiyawatta' and 'Ibba Gewaththa'. It was going towards Elihouse.

There were already a few oil bowsers parked in a row. These oil bowsers were supposed to enter the Bluemandle refinery via Elihouse Street. The driver turned his browser in from Ali house street, parked it behind another browser, and gradually moved towards the refinery behind it.

It was a long journey that took more than half an hour. While driving slowly behind the bowser in front of him, the driver took out a picture from a drawer on the dashboard. That was a picture of a Muslim woman.

After kissing the forehead of the woman in the picture, he put it back safely. He thought about his wife, who Sinhalese killed in the army in Jaffna. 'Umma, I'm coming to you too' as he whispered that the two women hiding behind him also started to chant the 'Al-janathu-ullana. Which means 'the heaven is with us, the heaven where we meet the deceased is with us.'

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The bowser entered from the gate of the refinery. When it entered, an army soldier stopped the bowser to check its papers. As the bowser was registered for the company, he knocked on the body of the bowser and signed it to go ahead. The driver raised the speed more than before and entered the refinery.
Once inside the oil refinery, the driver freed it from the other bowsers in front of him and started to take it at high speed through a side road to the main road. A row of enormous oil tanks has been stored in petrol and diesel.
When the browser was moving fast on the side road, the army officers who were suspicious about it started shouting.

"Hey... stop"

But there was no stopping it; the bowser was still running fast towards the oil tankers. The army started shooting at the bowser continuously, but it is doubtful that even one of those bullets hit the fast-moving vehicle.
'Allahhuakbar,' the driver screamed. Sufi and Shihara removed the cover and came out. They knelt near the driver's seat and held into their bombed jackets tightly. The bowser was directly driven into the biggest oil tank on the corner.

As the browser almost hit the tank, the driver once again shouted 'Allah hu Akbar, and this time, Sufi and Shihara also joined him. It was only a matter of time before the speeding bowser hit the largest Oil tank in the oil refinery. At the same time, the browser exploded, shaking the entire Bluemandle Street. And the fire that rose from it spread everywhere in the refinery like Wildfire from an atomic bomb. A few more tanks nearby caught fire.

The shock

The whole 'Kotahena' was shaken by two bombs that exploded one after the other. While people were in their sleep, the blast at night was more severe than the one which occurred the previous morning at the bakery. The people in the houses near the oil refinery left and started running empty-handed. The sky was reddish as several oil tanks were still burning.
The roads in Bluemandle were loaded with fire trucks. Police hurried to evacuate people because the burning oil tanks could explode. At that moment, the Air Force also came into action. They started dropping water on the burning oil tanks from the air
by helicopters. But they could not even go near it as the flames were already burning high with heavy smoke.
When efforts of watering from the air failed, they joined soldiers spraying water from the base of oil tanks. In this way, the Air Force, the police and the fire department were fiercely struggling to put out the fire. Oil pipelines run through tunnels from the oil tank via the Bluemandle railway to the harbour. Suspecting they would explode any moment, the poor people living on the Kotahena Railway closed their huts. They started running as far as they could along the road, carrying whatever valuables they could get their hands on.